

# EPA Region III

Office of Public Affairs

## Special Headlines Edition: Dimock articles

**Friday, January 20, 2012**

### **EPA to deliver water in Dimock**

**PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER** Federal regulators said Thursday that they would deliver drinking water to four households near natural gas wells in the embattled town of Dimock, casting doubt on Pennsylvania's decision to allow a Marcellus Shale operator to halt deliveries in December. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency also said it would conduct its own water sampling at 61 homes in the rural Susquehanna County township "to further assess whether any residents are being exposed to hazardous substances that cause health concerns." "EPA is working diligently to understand the situation in Dimock and address residents' concerns," said EPA Regional Administrator Shawn M. Garvin. "We believe that the information provided to us by the residents deserves further review, and conducting our own sampling will help us fill information gaps." The EPA's intervention is the latest development in its on-again, off-again involvement in Dimock, where the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection blamed drilling by Cabot Oil & Gas Corp., of Houston, for contaminating water wells of 19 homes three years ago. The controversy has pitted neighbor against neighbor, with some residents engaged in a federal lawsuit against Cabot, which denies its drilling contaminated the wells. Relations between state and federal regulators have become increasingly tart over the response. Cabot halted water deliveries to the homes Dec. 1 after the state said it had met the terms of a 2010 settlement and after federal regulators declared the water posed no health risk....EPA toxicologist Dawn A. Ioven, in a memo posted on the agency's website, said well-test results from eight homes showed that four "contained contaminants at levels of potential concern." The well water of one house, whose occupants include two toddlers, contained arsenic at levels that would pose a long-term cancer risk.

### **EPA will test Dimock water supplies, deliver to four homes**

**SCRANTON TIMES-TRIBUNE** The federal government will begin testing water supplies for 61 homes in Dimock Twp. as soon as today in a dramatic expansion of the Environmental Protection Agency's current investigation into potential contamination by natural gas drilling and hydraulic fracturing in the Susquehanna County township. Citing its authority under the Superfund law, the EPA will also begin providing replacement drinking water supplies to four township homes where water tests taken by outside firms raised health concerns - some of them rising to the level of an "imminent and substantial threat" in houses where small children live, the agency said. The EPA reached out to both the state Department of Environmental Protection and Cabot Oil & Gas Corp., the Marcellus Shale driller active in the area, to ask if they would be interested in working with the agency as it collects data. Both agreed to cooperate Thursday, but indicated they were not convinced that the EPA's actions are necessary. "Our review, so far, tells us that EPA does not seem to have presented any new data here," DEP spokeswoman Katherine Gresh said. "More than a year ago, DEP's enforcement action addressed this issue and ensured funds were set aside to resolve the water quality issues for these homeowners." Cabot spokesman George Stark said the company's tests show the Dimock well water meets federal health standards or reflects natural conditions and the company's operations are not responsible for the health concerns cited by the EPA. State regulators have found Cabot responsible for contaminating water supplies

for 19 Dimock homes with methane from faulty gas wells, but the EPA on Thursday indicated that the contaminants in Dimock water, and the potential threat posed by the compounds, is greater than previously acknowledged.

## **Residents react to EPA water testing, delivery announcement**

**SCRANTON TIMES-TRIBUNE** DIMOCK - Craig and Julie Sautner's phone rang like an angry alarm clock most of Thursday afternoon and into the night, loudly announcing calls from family and friends congratulating the couple on their news. Mrs. Sautner beamed as her husband fielded the calls, happy to hear that this afternoon, they'd be receiving what they've waited for for weeks. "I sound like I won the lottery, and all I got was water. I'm thrilled," she said. The Sautners are one of four Dimock households slated to receive fresh water from the Environmental Protection Agency, after the organization's review of tests deemed their wells to contain levels of contaminants that pose a health concern. The EPA also announced it would test about 60 homes' water supplies for hazardous substances that could pose health concerns. "It looked like coffee with milk in it," Mr. Sautner recalled about water pumped from his well. Cabot Oil and Gas Corp. stopped providing clean water to the Sautners in early December with the consent of the state, leaving the family dependent on organizations opposed to the drilling, as well as friends and volunteers outside the drilling zone to bring fresh drinking water. That meant having their water storage tank filled from garden hoses. With freezing temperatures the past few days, showering and other daily tasks have been difficult.

## **EPA again vows to send fresh water to Pa. village where wells were tainted by gas drilling**

**ASSOCIATED PRESS** ALLENTOWN, Pa. — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday that it will deliver fresh water to four homes in a northeastern Pennsylvania village where residential water wells were tainted by a gas driller. The agency also said it will begin testing the water supplies of dozens more homes as it ramps up its investigation more than three years after homeowners say the water supply was ruined. Capping a tumultuous two weeks in which EPA first promised the residents a tanker of water — and then quickly backed away, saying more study was needed — federal environmental regulators said they have concluded that contaminant levels in four of the homes pose a health hazard and require emergency action. Some of the water samples, the agency said, were found to be polluted with cancer-causing arsenic and synthetic chemicals typically found in drilling fluids. The first delivery of water is scheduled for Friday. "I can't even tell you, again, what a relief this is. because that's all we've asked for — water," said Julie Sautner, one of the homeowners. Additionally, EPA said it will sample water at 61 homes in the area of Carter and Meshoppen roads "to assess further whether any residents are being exposed to hazardous substances that cause health concerns." The testing, to be carried out over the next several weeks, marks a significant expansion of the agency's probe in Dimock, a tiny crossroads at the center of a national debate over gas drilling and the extraction technique known as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking.

## **EPA steps in to test Pa. town's tainted well water**

**PITTSBURGH POST GAZETTE** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday it will begin testing well water supplies at 60 homes in Dimock, Pa., the small Susquehanna County town where residents say Marcellus Shale gas drilling has contaminated their water. In a move at odds with the state's environmental department, the EPA also said it will start delivering water today to four homes where the well water is undrinkable. Craig Sautner, who with his wife and two children, lives in one of those four homes, said he is "ecstatic" about the EPA's decision to take a more active role in Dimock. The community was featured in the 2010 documentary "Gasland" about the natural gas drilling boom in the United States. On Nov. 30, Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. stopped filling residents' 550-gallon water "buffalo" tanks after the state Department of Environmental Protection ruled the gas company had met its obligations under a 2010 consent agreement. The EPA began its own review of the well water problems in Dimock in mid-December and has taken weeks to decide what to do there or

whether to do anything. Dimock residents and environmental activists last week demonstrated outside a conference where EPA administrator Lisa Jackson was speaking in Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences, imploring the agency to act. EPA regional administrator Shawn Garvin said health concerns due to the contamination prompted the EPA's decision to provide water to four families immediately while additional water testing is done. "We believe that the information provided to us by the residents deserves further review," Mr. Garvin said, "and conducting our own sampling will help us fill information gaps." He said any future actions by the agency "will be based on the science and we will work to help get a more complete picture of water quality for these homes in Dimock."

## **EPA Finds Arsenic And Barium In Dimock Households' Water**

**STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA** The Environmental Protection Agency has found arsenic, barium and other "hazardous substances" in the private water wells of four homes in Dimock, Susquehanna County. The chemicals — while not definitively linked to recent gas drilling — pose "a chronic health risk" in the Dimock area, according to an EPA Action Memorandum. A bit of background: ever since methane migration problems began occurring at private water wells in early 2009, Dimock has become ground zero in the battle over hydraulic fracturing. Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection blamed the methane contamination on faulty gas wells drilled by Cabot Oil and Gas, and ultimately forced the company to pay more than \$4 million to affected families. Cabot maintains it's not responsible for the methane problems. As part of their legal agreement, DEP forced Cabot to provide water to more than a dozen Dimock families. But in December, the agency determined the company had met its requirements, and released it from the obligation.

## **EPA to Send Water to *Dimock* Households**

**STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will send clean water to residents of the Susquehanna County community where natural gas drilling has contaminated water supplies. About a dozen families in Dimock, Pa. have a lawsuit pending against Cabot Oil and Gas. The EPA says four of those families will receive fresh water deliveries. Three years ago, residents began to notice changes to their water, and were able to set their taps on fire. State regulators blamed Cabot for faulty well construction and ordered the company to supply clean water. But in November, 2011 the state Department of Environmental Protection gave Cabot the green light to halt water shipments. Residents have since been relying on donations. Several weeks ago, regional EPA officials contacted residents to tell them the federal government would start supplying water. But then a day later, that decision was reversed. DEP chief Michael Krancer has criticized EPA's role in Dimock, writing in a letter to EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson that the EPA's understanding of the issue was "rudimentary."

## **EPA announces new testing and fresh water for Dimock**

**HARRISBURG PATRIOT-NEWS** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday it would conduct independent tests of well water at 60 homes in Dimock, where Cabot Oil & Gas has been accused of fouling the aquifer as it drilled for gas in the Marcellus Shale. The EPA said it will conduct tests at approximately 60 homes. It will also ensure temporary water is supplied to four homes "where data reviewed by EPA indicates that residents' well water contains levels of contaminants that pose a health concern." The state Department of Environmental Protection cited and fined Cabot for allowing methane to migrate into people's water through faulty well casings, but some residents have maintained their water is also contaminated with some of the same chemicals used in the fracking process that releases the gas from the shale. The EPA had previously reviewed water samples provided by DEP, Cabot and Dimock residents. Regional EPA Administrator Shawn M. Garvin said in a press release, "We believe that the information provided to us by the residents deserves further review, and conducting our own sampling will help us fill information gaps. Our actions will be based on the science and the law and we will work to help get a more complete picture of water quality for these homes in Dimock." The release added that "natural gas plays a key role in our nation's clean energy future and the Obama Administration is committed to ensuring that the development of this vital resource occurs safely and responsibly." The EPA said it would take

approximately three weeks to conduct the tests and another five weeks to get results.

## **EPA to Deliver Water to Dimock's Carter Road**

**WNEP-TV SCRANTON** The federal government is expanding its investigation into contaminated drinking water in Susquehanna County, contamination that residents blame on natural gas drilling. The Environmental Protection Agency will also start providing drinking water to some homes. Nearly two months after the state said Cabot Oil and Gas no longer had to deliver water to homes along Carter Road in Dimock, the federal government is now stepping in to help. The EPA announced late Thursday afternoon that it will be testing 60 homes in that area of Susquehanna County to see if there is any water well contamination. On top of that, the federal government will make sure water is delivered to several homes there. Dimock, and especially Carter Road, have become a focal point in the national debate on natural gas drilling and fracking. When the state allowed Cabot to stop water deliveries a month and a half ago, national groups rallied in support of the people living along the road. Environmental groups have been delivering water to homes in this area ever since. "Been quite a trying time. We've been living out of jugs for about three years now and it's not easy. You make coffee, you've got to use a jug of water. You cook, you've got to use a jug of water," said Ron Carter, who has lived along Carter Road nearly all his life. Now, the EPA said it is stepping in. The federal agency will test the 60 homes to see if hazardous materials are in the well water. In the meantime, the EPA will make sure that water is delivered to four homes where some tests show contamination, including the Carter's. "I'm happy with the EPA's decision now to step in and help us. I'm so happy to think that they will do something about this, because we've been in this situation for over three years now and we just can't seem to get any help," added Jean Carter. Craig and Julie Sautner will also be receiving an EPA water delivery and said they look forward to some sense of normalcy. "Just doing the things we're supposed to be doing. Not worrying about water, where we're going to get our next delivery," said Julie Sautner. "It's not right. Cabot took something away from us and we want it back. They destroyed my well, my water and I want it back," added Craig Sautner. "I want clean, fresh water. That's what I want." The deliveries will begin Friday afternoon. The EPA said the testing will begin in a matter of days and it will take three weeks to sample water from all the homes. Results from the testing are expected five weeks after the samples are taken. The EPA is also doing national research to see the impact of natural gas drilling and fracking on well water.

## **Dimock, Pa., Receiving Water Shipment; EPA To Sample 60 Wells**

**INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS TIMES** Almost three weeks after federal regulators revisited families in Dimock, Pa., the Environmental Protection Agency announced Thursday it will test water samples from at least 60 homes in the area. And in a move that defies pronouncements made by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and Cabot Oil & Gas Corp., the EPA also announced it is making sure four households who say their water wells have been contaminated by hydraulic fracturing for natural gas drilling will be receiving fresh water shipments. The deliveries, announced the EPA, reflect data that suggests the "well water contains levels of contaminants that pose a health concern." According to data compiled by the EPA, and available for review on its Web site, regulators found evidence of Bis(2-ethylhexyl)phthalate, a plasticizer, glycols, known drilling chemicals, manganese and arsenic, all of which are considered hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, and the EPA's National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan. In November, using water data compiled by Cabot Oil and the state's DEP, the EPA ruled the wells' water was safe to drink. George Stark, a spokesman for Cabot Oil, said the company stands by its pronouncement, and added any discrepancy in the water data should be explained by the EPA. In December, additional water data made "confidential" by Cabot Oil was made available, and Dimock residents sent the data to the EPA after obligatory water shipments to residents was halted on Nov. 31; the EPA started revisiting the data and reassessed its stance. Late in December, regulators visited the town to compile more data. "They've seen enough to bring us water tomorrow," said Julie Sautner, who along with her husband, has been vocal in her efforts to hold their state and Cabot Oil accountable for the alleged contamination. Sautner added her home is one the four to receive water shipments. "We thought our government had failed us."

## **Feds to expand *Dimock*, Pa. water investigation**

**BINGHAMTON PRESS AND SUN BULLETIN (N.Y.)** DIMOCK, Pa. -- In an apparent rebuke of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's handling of the issue, the federal government announced Thursday it is expanding its investigation into gas drilling-related public health concerns in Susquehanna County. Starting Friday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will arrange for shipments of fresh water to four Dimock Township families with contaminated water wells, and in the coming weeks will conduct testing at approximately 61 water wells in the community. Since contamination concerns emerged in 2008, the DEP has played the lead role in trying to settle the fray between Cabot Oil & Gas and a group of landowners who have said the company's nearby drilling and hydraulic fracturing operations destroyed the water. Now, it appears, the federal government is taking the lead. The EPA indicated in a statement issued Thursday that the agency decided to conduct the new testing based on its review of data supplied by residents, Cabot and DEP. The sampling is contingent on homeowners granting EPA access to their properties, and results will be available within about five weeks following the sampling, the agency said. "We believe that the information provided to us by the residents deserves further review, and conducting our own sampling will help us fill information gaps," EPA Regional Administrator Shawn M. Garvin said in a statement. "Our actions will be based on the science and the law and we will work to help get a more complete picture of water quality for these homes in Dimock." Dimock landowner Craig Sautner, whose family is among the four to receive water shipments starting Friday, said the EPA's decision raises questions about the DEP's work. "It makes you wonder: How come the EPA can find something in the data but the DEP couldn't?" Sautner said. "Was somebody overlooking something or they didn't want to say something? I really don't know."

## **EPA Providing Water to Homes Near Pennsylvania Fracking Site**

**BLOOMBERG BUSINESS NEWS** The Environmental Protection Agency will deliver water to four families in Dimock, Pennsylvania, where residents say their water has been contaminated during hydraulic fracturing by Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. The EPA will also test water at 60 homes to assess whether any residents are being exposed to hazardous substances, the agency said in a statement. "EPA is working diligently to understand the situation in Dimock and address residents' concerns," EPA Regional Administrator Shawn M. Garvin said in a statement. "Conducting our own sampling will help us fill information gaps." Residents and activists protested outside a venue where EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson was speaking in Philadelphia last week, urging her to force Houston-based Cabot to clean up wells they say were contaminated after drilling started nearby. The company is using hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, a process that injects water and chemicals to free gas in rock....The agency offered water to the families earlier this month and then reversed the decision the next day. The EPA now has agreed to start water delivery tomorrow, Michael Kulik, an agency spokesman, said in an e-mail.

## **EPA to test water near Penn. fracking site**

**REUTERS NEWS SERVICE** Regulators said on Thursday they will perform water tests at about 60 homes in the small town of Dimock in northern Pennsylvania where residents say natural gas drilling has polluted wells. The Environmental Protection Agency also plans to truck water to four homes in the town where some households have relied on water deliveries since drilling by Cabot Oil & Gas Corp began there three years ago, it said in a statement on Thursday. The tests, which will begin in the coming days, are being carried out "to further assess whether any residents are being exposed to hazardous substances that cause health concerns," the EPA said. The announcement represents a reversal for the EPA, which six weeks ago declared the water in the 1,400-person town safe to drink before receiving more data provided by residents. It is also the clearest sign yet that regulators are concerned about the effect of drilling on drinking water there. Dimock, in a busy drilling area above the gas-rich Marcellus shale deposit, has become the center of a national debate over the natural gas extraction technique called fracking, which involves pumping millions of gallons of chemical-laced water into shale rock deep below the ground. Fracking has unlocked decades of U.S. natural gas supply, but environmentalists say it contaminates water supplies. Energy companies have said fracking, which is being done across the country, poses no threat to drinking

water. Cabot spokesman George Stark said the company has tested and sampled water from more than 2,000 wells in the area over the past several years and does not have data showing drilling is the cause of "alleged health concerns purported by the EPA." Dimock residents began complaining of cloudy, foul-smelling water in 2008 after Cabot began fracking nearby.